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Chair: Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales ..... (Guatemala)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening statement by the Chair

1. **The Chair** said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships — provided a guiding, universal and uncontested vision for the welfare of future generations. The high-level political forum on sustainable development, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must continue to increase their support for its implementation.

2. During the current session, the Committee would work to ensure the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda by engaging in dialogue and seeking to provide political guidance on many pressing sustainable development issues, such as the international financial system, external debt sustainability and development, and international trade and development. In so doing, it would also bear in mind the priorities of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and address matters related to the mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development, as underlined in the 2030 Agenda.

3. Despite substantial progress, poverty remained widespread in the least developed countries and a pervasive problem in most middle-income countries. The international community must therefore support countries, particularly those in special situations, in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, special attention should be given to addressing productive capacity and infrastructure challenges in Africa and the least developed countries, where development potential was constrained by unfair trade practices.

4. Effective strategic direction and guidance on sustainable development at the global level depended on the respective agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, their subsidiary bodies, the high-level political forum and other related forums all being aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The General Assembly had recently called for continued consultations on alignment with the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing that synergies among the agendas of the various bodies and forums should be enhanced, and that the Main Committees should continue to work with Member States to consolidate or eliminate agenda items where possible.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

5. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the clear focus of the Committee's work during the current session was to translate into reality the vision laid out in the 2030 Agenda. While the momentum remained strong for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as evidenced by the number of countries presenting voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum, progress remained too slow and uneven. However, the Committee could reflect on how to accelerate such progress through the various sectoral and other policy issues on its agenda.

6. The 2030 Agenda was being implemented in a changing global environment: on the one hand, global economic growth of at least 3 per cent was projected for the next few years; on the other, escalating global trade tensions and prolonged uncertainty in global trade could have severe consequences for businesses, consumer confidence, asset prices and investment behaviour, leading to a sharp slowdown in economic activity. At the same time, spiralling protectionist and retaliatory measures threatened to set back the multilateral trading system and multilateralism more broadly.

7. Financial vulnerabilities had also been increasing in many developing countries, exposing them to exchange rate pressures, greater financial volatility and sudden capital withdrawal. Countries experiencing fragile gross domestic product growth, elevated political uncertainty or large current account or fiscal deficits had become more susceptible to financial volatility and were at greater risk of contagion from external shocks.

8. The undercurrent of geopolitical tensions had the potential to severely disrupt economic activity in a number of countries. Meanwhile, the threat from climate change continued to loom large, especially in vulnerable small island developing States. In the face of such increasing risks, it was more imperative than ever for policymakers to build resilience by investing in inclusive and sustainable development and exploring interlinked solutions, particularly to address the related problems of poverty, hunger and conflict.

9. The achievement of the Sustainable Goals would require financial stability and sustainability, as highlighted in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In that context, the Secretary-General had recently launched his strategy for financing the 2030 Agenda, which laid out the actions that the United Nations would need to take to accelerate resource mobilization for the Goals. The strategy also related to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the repositioning of the

United Nations development system, a process in which the engagement of Member States would be crucial. The operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council would provide an important forum to receive further guidance from Member States in early 2019. The Committee would also be briefed on the system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027).

10. The Committee would shortly be reflecting on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which contained an agreement to repurpose the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development as the International Migration Review Forum. For its part, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was fully committed to supporting the development of such a Review Forum.

11. The Committee would also need to consider the technological revolution that was transforming lives and shaping the future. The collective ambition of achieving the 2030 Agenda now critically hinged on harnessing new frontier technologies for the collective good.

12. In the context of the high-level political forum, which would be convened both under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July 2019 and under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019, Heads of State and Government would review progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and discuss actions for accelerating the implementation of 2030 Agenda. Deliberations by the Committee would certainly help to build consensus on some of the key issues that would be addressed at the next cycle of the high-level political forum.

Keynote address by Mr. Kharas, Interim Vice-President and Director of the Global Economy and Development Programme at the Brookings Institution

13. **Mr. Kharas** (Interim Vice-President and Director of the Global Economy and Development Programme at the Brookings Institution), accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation, said that he wished to share his findings on the progress made towards the achievement of 21 of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets in the 2030 Agenda. Those particular targets had been selected because they were the only ones that were people-centred, quantified and therefore measurable.

14. The overall purpose of the study undertaken within that framework had been to determine where the most and least progress was being made, disaggregated by target and by country, and to illustrate anticipated shortfalls in the achievement of the targets based on current trajectories. The 21 targets selected had been divided into two categories: targets for which the stakes were clearly life and death, or "lives at stake" targets, and targets that involved people having their basic needs met, or "needs at stake" targets.

15. In the first category, which included such targets as ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age (target 3.2) and reducing by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (target 3.4), it was found that just over 40 million lives would be lost if current trajectories towards achievement persisted, including 9 million children.

16. In the second category, which included targets related to air pollution, gender equality and sanitation, the number of people projected to be left behind, given current trajectories, ranged from the billions to the hundreds of millions, depending on the target. Progress towards sanitation-related targets was inadequate, with an estimated 2 billion people projected to still lack basic sanitation by 2030. Furthermore, as the targets on air pollution no longer reflected the latest levels of particulates considered safe to breathe, negative progress was being made towards their achievement. Regression was also observed on targets related to childhood obesity.

17. At the country level, the people to be left behind, should current trajectories hold, would be concentrated in a few countries that comprised the bulk of the global population, including China, India and Nigeria. Thus, if global totals were to be improved, greater focus should be placed on those countries. Even in large advanced economies such as the United States of America, the outlook was poor for achieving certain targets, including those related to childhood obesity and gender equality.

18. Progress was ongoing in every country, but it was too slow. While poor countries were still the furthest behind, the same patterns of inadequate progress could be observed in Member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Given current trajectories, by 2030 at least half of the distance to the Sustainable Development Goals would remain to be covered for 16 of the 21 targets examined.

19. While there was still room for optimism in the light of the progress made to date, full achievement of the Goals would require significant and sustained acceleration of implementation efforts in every country, with a particular emphasis on large countries.

20. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala), lead discussant, welcomed the fact that the keynote speaker had used the 2030 Agenda

as a framework to motivate improved development outcomes for all and said that the methodology employed for measuring the distance to achieving the Goals was a useful complement to the global indicator framework adopted through General Assembly resolution 71/313.

21. The potential acceleration of past trends, though contingent upon appropriate international and national policies, provided a basis for optimism. However, there was cause for concern in a cluster of mostly sub-Saharan African countries where violent conflict had erupted in the recent past and was liable to continue. In those countries, deceleration or retrogression of past trends was, sadly, plausible.

22. In closing, he first asked the keynote speaker how progress might be tracked for Goals that were not easily susceptible to quantification, such as Goal 16, which sought to promote peace, justice and strong institutions. Second, given the scepticism and hostility of certain Member States towards multilateralism and the considerable erosion of the international order under which the 2030 Agenda had been adopted, he wondered how the current political environment might affect the achievement of the Goals.

23. **Mr. Bolaji** (Nigeria) expressed a desire for more concrete advice on how to accelerate cooperation and assistance in the face of the diverse and persistent challenges facing countries, particularly at the local level.

24. **Mr. Babajide** (Observer for the European Union) said that leaving no one behind was at the heart of development cooperation policy in the European Union. More needed to be done to improve the scope and coverage of data collection and analysis, including by building capacities in partner countries. The European Union would continue to support the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and OECD in that regard.

25. International development cooperation efforts must be built around the national plans and priorities of partner countries. A reformed United Nations development system that included a strengthened resident coordinator system should help to achieve that aim. The European Union, for its part, would continue to do all it could to focus its development cooperation efforts on the most excluded partners and to improve the way that it monitored and reviewed progress.

26. **Mr. Kharas** (Interim Vice-President and Director of the Global Economy and Development Programme at the Brookings Institution) said that tracking progress towards the Goals that were not easily measurable would require more nuanced and timely data. Unfortunately, many of the countries of greatest concern had the least developed statistical capabilities and therefore the least data. Capacity-building efforts should therefore be focused in those areas. Because statistics published by Governments tended to be too out of date to be useful for effective policymaking, researchers were increasingly turning to alternative sources of data. However, those data should ideally be used as a complement to official survey data, and nowhere was that of greater importance than at the subnational level.

27. The research presented in his keynote address had been intended only to document the size and nature of the challenges at hand. Identifying concrete steps to accelerate development progress was best addressed at the country level, where the understanding of specific national needs was most acute, and that was already under way in the form of voluntary national reviews. Implementation, on the other hand, was an area that required international resources and favourable global conditions above and beyond changes in national policy.

28. The world had indeed changed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, but much of that change had been positive. For example, fears that artificial intelligence would lead to significant displacement in the labour market had largely been debunked, although that might yet come to pass in the medium to long term. Consensus had been building to the effect that diversified and resilient economies were essential to the inclusivity required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable growth had begun to take hold, as evidenced by the inclusion of sustainability in the medium-term strategies of many corporations. However, more investment was needed in research and development, data collection and implementation at the local and national levels in order to generate the technological innovation upon which accelerated progress would depend.

General debate

29. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions was the greatest global challenge and a prerequisite for sustainable development. Successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda was therefore of paramount importance. The scale and level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda required strengthening the means of implementation, creating an enabling global environment for development and maintaining such fundamental principles as leaving no one behind and ensuring common but differentiated responsibilities.

30. For sustainable economic growth to positively contribute to poverty eradication, macroeconomic policies must focus on job creation and on economic and social inclusion. Young people had vast potential to contribute to development and social cohesion. In order to generate sustainable employment opportunities for them, it was necessary to expand productive capacities, industrialization and infrastructure development, and thus ensure sufficient labour-intensive economic growth. The economic empowerment of women also lay at the heart of efforts to achieve sustainable development.

31. Official development assistance (ODA) would continue to be an important means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, it was essential to assist countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability and to promote international trade as an important source to finance development and achieve inclusive economic growth as well as poverty eradication. The Group therefore reaffirmed the significance of a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization. It also regarded the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries on favourable terms as vital for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

32. Welcoming the upcoming twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018, the Group stressed the importance of ensuring that its outcome was fully operationalized and reflected not only the delicate balance of the Paris Agreement, including on issues related to adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation, but also the urgent need to scale up the level of ambition as informed by science.

33. Similarly, urgent and significant actions would be needed to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species. In that context, the Group also welcomed the convening of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2018.

34. As a complement to, not a substitute for, North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for solidarity, national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit. Furthermore, States should refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Such measures hindered development finance and prevented the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

35. In order to leave no one behind, the diverse needs and challenges faced by countries in specific situations must be addressed. Multilateralism offered all countries an important opportunity to address complex challenges through collective action. In that spirit, the Group particularly wished to reaffirm the important tradition of adopting draft resolutions in the Committee by consensus.

36. **Mr. Locsin, Jr.** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Association remained committed to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the underlying principle of leaving no one behind. In that context, it had taken concrete steps to build resilience, promote innovation and develop regional smart cities, including the promotion of complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda. In particular, the incoming Chair of ASEAN had proposed the establishment of an ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in Bangkok in 2019 to promote sustainable development research, build relevant capacities and serve as a platform for policy dialogue between ASEAN and its external partners, including the United Nations.

37. Substantial progress had been achieved following the implementation of the Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry for the period 2016–2025, which sought to enhance trade facilitation and ensure food security, food safety, better nutrition and equitable distribution; the ASEAN Work Plan on Education (2016–2020), which aspired to provide inclusive educational opportunities for all ASEAN citizens; and the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda, which focused on promoting healthy lifestyles and access to health care, enhancing food safety and responding to hazards and emerging threats. With regard to the latter, the ASEAN-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management constituted an important step towards greater coherence in United Nations engagement with ASEAN on disaster risk reduction and management.

38. Other recent achievements by ASEAN included strengthened cooperation to promote sustainable development, including through the development of the circular economy, the use of renewable energy, the

reduction of waste and the conservation of biodiversity. ASEAN was in the process of finalizing its strategic plan on the environment, which would serve as a guiding document for cooperation in that area. The Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Climate Action had been convened on 10 July 2018 for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

39. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that the Committee's work was crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway). The Committee also served as an important platform for coordinating collective action to address sustainable development issues.

40. The preparatory process was already under way for the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway on 27 September 2019. All States should participate in that process in order to track the progress made towards achieving sustainable development, share best practices and identify areas that still required attention in the face of growing global challenges. Small island developing States had themselves held three regional preparatory meetings, in Mauritius, Belize and Tonga, and would shortly hold their interregional meeting in Samoa to make the necessary substantive preparations for the midterm review. Development partners should also actively participate in that review and reaffirm their commitments to accelerate the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and provide resources to the voluntary trust fund.

41. Small island developing States needed increased support, including assistance with capacity-building, technology transfer and access to finance, to achieve the goals set out in the internationally agreed development frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations could assume a greater leadership role in fostering such support.

42. The reports of the Secretary-General focused on small island developing States, particularly the assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the small island developing States units of the Secretariat (A/73/345), clearly indicated the limitations of the Secretariat units to perform their obligations. Hence the need to provide those units with more predictable and sufficient funds to allow them to fulfil their evolving mandates.

43. Climate change continued to pose the biggest challenge to the sustainable development and economic growth of small island developing States. The political will and determination of those States to fulfil the purpose of the Paris Agreement had been demonstrated by their ambitious commitments submitted thereunder. They recognized the value of the facilitative dialogue held in 2018 and, in preparation for the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, urged all countries to accelerate efforts to agree on the work programme under the Paris Agreement. Progress must be made across all the items on the agenda, including interlinked elements, to ensure full operationalization of the Paris Agreement. At the same time, the means of implementation remained the most critical aspect for a favourable outcome.

44. **Mr. Carazo Zeledón** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, said that middle-income countries continued to face significant and specific development challenges. Many countries that had recently graduated to middle-income status or would shortly do so, for example, were concerned that a graduation process based on per capita income would not allow them to maintain their access to concessional financing from intergovernmental organizations. The Group therefore encouraged multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to include multidimensional eligibility criteria in their financial policies.

45. The Group stressed the need to increase access to financial resources in support of the sustainable development efforts of middle-income countries and called on ODA providers to fulfil their respective commitments to developing and least developed countries. While welcoming South-South cooperation as an important complement to, not a substitute for, North-South cooperation, the Group also encouraged the promotion of triangular cooperation and supported continued efforts to improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation.

46. The United Nations should elaborate a comprehensive system-wide and long-term strategy to facilitate sustainable development cooperation with, and coordinated support for, middle-income countries. Furthermore, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other relevant organizations should jointly establish a road map to address the most pressing sustainable development needs of middle-income countries, including their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals. For the United Nations to respond adequately to the demands of 2030 Agenda, there was an urgent need to develop transparent metrics beyond per capita income.

47. The Group looked forward to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/230, entitled "Development cooperation with middle-income countries", in particular the convening of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 4 December 2018 to discuss the gaps and challenges of middle-income countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

48. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the world was facing overwhelming challenges. Crises such as climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, unprecedented human mobility and displacements were further compounding the structural challenges that the 47 most vulnerable countries of the world had been facing. While globalization had deeply taken root, as its benefits were not yet shared equitably the least developed countries had not been able to fully reap its rewards. There was also a risk that the benefits of frontier technologies would be inequitably distributed: artificial intelligence divides might reinforce the digital divides that were already fuelling economic inequality and undermining competitiveness.

49. At their current rate of economic growth, the least developed countries were unlikely to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. Furthermore, 33 least developed countries with a combined population of 82 million required urgent food assistance and long-term investment to ensure their food and nutrition security. Debt relief would also be vitally important for least developed countries, as would duty-free, quota-free market access, simplified rules of origin and an increased share of aid for trade.

50. While the least developed countries had made progress in some areas, including access to electricity, school enrolment rates and women's participation in elected office, the results achieved to date remained insufficient to catch up with other developing countries. The Group therefore welcomed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and the 4 per cent increase, in real terms, in bilateral aid from the countries belonging to the OECD Development Assistance Committee. Nevertheless, the share of ODA remained at 0.09 per cent of the donors' gross national income and only 6 countries had reached the lower threshold of the ODA targets for least developed countries. Development partners therefore needed to fulfil and go beyond their ODA commitment of 0.15–0.20 per cent of gross national income. The quality of ODA, including with respect to predictability and alignment with countries' priorities, also needed to increase.

51. In order to address those challenges and accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries, the Committee needed to take a fresh look during the current session at the support available to and required by those countries.

52. **Mr. Webson** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the Committee's work should focus on ensuring the successful implementation of all the international agreements within its purview. Sustainable development remained central to such work and the unique challenges faced by small island developing States must continue to be addressed in that context, particularly the dire threat of climate change; the Samoa Pathway remained the current point of reference for shaping such discussions. The Committee should provide full and pragmatic support for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, its annual review within the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and its midterm review in 2019.

53. The path to sustainable development must be based on the equality of nations and mutual respect for all, regardless of a country's stage of development. While there was strong evidence that the global economy had improved tremendously, the growth in the global economy was uneven. That was particularly true for countries within the CARICOM subregion, where improvements in the economy were still inadequate to address the problem of unemployment, particularly amongst youth, and the challenge of debt sustainability.

54. The phenomenon of de-risking, which had disrupted traditional correspondent banking relations, was one of the major challenges facing the Caribbean region. Correspondent banking was a global public good that must be available to all countries, large and small. The unilateral withdrawal of those relations threatened to separate CARICOM countries from the global trading system, weaken their economies and increase the level of poverty. The Committee should therefore find creative ways to discuss the harmful practice of de-risking under the agenda item on macroeconomic policy questions.

55. Many CARICOM members had lost access to concessionary financing following their graduation to middle-income status. As a result, they had been forced to take on significant debt to finance their resilience measures as vulnerable small islands. The international community should therefore reconsider the metrics for determining access to financing, including by means of a vulnerability index. CARICOM would continue to advocate for a review of the criteria for determining the

access of middle-income countries to concessionary financing, particularly given their heterogeneity.

56. CARICOM welcomed the decision by the President of the General Assembly to postpone the high-level meeting on middle income countries that was to take place during the current year's high-level debate and fully supported the need for a more elevated high-level meeting in the coming months, to which the Committee could contribute.

57. Member States should allocate additional resources to the units focused on small island developing States of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Increased funding to both would allow for the effective implementation of their additional mandates, which included the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda.

58. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Committee should continue to focus on providing coordinated and integrated guidance on micro and macroeconomic policies relating to poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, international trade and development, the 2030 Agenda and its related targets.

59. The successful and harmonized implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda would largely depend on strengthening institutional and human capacities at various levels. Sustainable development was a collective opportunity and responsibility that could be achieved through multilateral cooperation, the honouring of international commitments, including the scaling up of cooperation to curb illicit financial flows, and the provision of means of implementation support to developing countries. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, all action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda should be fully implemented. In that regard, addressing the implementation gaps of the Addis Agenda by mobilizing all types of resources from all sources was indispensable. That required a revitalized global partnership and solidarity as well as enhanced multi-stakeholder collaboration.

60. It was regrettable that reactionary tendencies had continued to cause a global decline in ODA. Adequate and predictable financing was indispensable to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that no one was left behind. African countries needed technical assistance and financing to strengthen their national capacities and help to grow their economies. ODA providers should therefore uphold their previous commitments and the international community should explore how to achieve a meaningful balance between debt sustainability and financing of the Sustainable Development Goals.

61. As one of the main means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, international trade must remain a priority. The African Group was firmly committed to a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system and was deeply concerned that the Doha Development Agenda had not been concluded.

62. Repositioning of the United Nations development system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/243, was a prerequisite for the success of the 2030 Agenda. A reformed development system must incorporate regional agendas and priorities for development in the collective quest to secure the future of sustainable prosperity and opportunity, leaving no one behind. In that regard, operational activities for development must take into account the need to build, promote and strengthen the capacity of African countries in their efforts to address long-term sustainable development at the national level. At the same time, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions should remain the highest priority and overarching objective of the reform efforts. The United Nations development system should continue to support the 2063 Agenda and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and United Nations entities should fully mainstream both instruments into their operational activities for development. Predictable funding must also be provided to enhance the development system's coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts.

63. The Group called for an effective and progressive international response to the threat that climate change posed to agriculture and food security. In that context, it was important to intensify discussions on combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, and recharging receding rivers, especially on the African continent which was disproportionately affected by those phenomena.

64. **Ms. Bird** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the three delegations she represented had developed a reputation in the Committee for demanding effective and efficient working methods that supported consensus outcomes, work-life balance, collegiality and the completion of sessions within set timeframes. They were proud of that reputation and were committed to supporting the Chair and facilitators in order to achieve those outcomes at the current session.

65. Their respective delegations would appreciate early warning of resolutions with possible budgetary implications and urged all States to allow sufficient time to consult, discuss and debate draft resolutions by ensuring that they were submitted within set deadlines. That approach would maximize the opportunity to reach consensus on the important issues before the Committee. As agreed in General Assembly resolution 72/313, the Committee should seek to minimize overlap in its agenda, and consider the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the agenda. The Committee should also avoid engaging in polemics on recent leader-level agreements or adding superfluous elements to procedural processes.

66. The Committee should promote increased gender equality, not only in the content of its resolutions, but also in its working methods. Promoting gender equality was principled because women and girls deserve equal treatment and outcomes to men and boys, and stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity debilitated development efforts. Gender equality was also pragmatic: it was perhaps the single most effective way to address poverty and inequality. To achieve global gender equality, the United Nations must lead by example.

67. Achieving the vision of the 2030 Agenda relied on some key foundations. First, the international community must redouble its commitment to leave no one behind. That included proactively seeking opportunities to identify and address the barriers to development faced by indigenous people, youth and minority groups, and promoting their enhanced participation in the United Nations system. Second, a strong awareness was required of the unique needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and countries in special situations. The current year was particularly significant for small island developing States, given the forthcoming midterm review of the Samoa Pathway, and the challenges and needs of small island developing States must be at the forefront of the Committee's considerations.

68. Climate change represented the greatest global challenge; it could only be combated by acting in concert and with shared purpose. Canada, Australia and New Zealand therefore reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Agreement.

69. Recognizing that disability-inclusive development cooperation was integral to aid effectiveness, their delegations were committed to ensuring that the Committee's achievements benefited the roughly 1 billion persons globally with disabilities. Furthermore, in line with the principle "nothing about us without us", they supported an active and central role for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in tackling the causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

70. Lastly, while acknowledging the need to overhaul global finance practices and mobilize partnerships across the international community at all levels, they shared a commitment to a progressive trade agenda that promoted meaningful trade liberalization and ensured that the benefits of trade were enjoyed broadly across all societies.

71. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that those countries faced immense geographical challenges which constrained their international competitiveness and overall socioeconomic progress. They faced high trade and transport costs and other challenges linked to inadequate infrastructure, inefficiencies at border crossings and bottlenecks related to customs procedures. As their export diversification and competitiveness remained limited and their productive capacities insufficient, landlocked developing countries were highly vulnerable to external shocks.

72. International trade was recognized as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and an important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group was therefore greatly concerned that the participation of landlocked developing countries in international trade remained negligible, at less than 1 per cent of global merchandise trade in 2017. That situation resulted in narrow production and export bases, leading to limited economic growth and persistent poverty.

73. Information and communications technology played an increasingly important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, landlocked developing countries continued to face excessive costs for broadband, which hampered opportunities to leverage e-commerce, smart transportation systems and emerging technologies for sustainable development.

74. Landlocked developing countries continued to employ policies that would enhance domestic resource mobilization, including strengthening revenue collection and related accountability mechanisms. However, their efforts were being undermined by trade imbalances, volatile commodity prices and an underdeveloped private sector, among other factors. Addressing those challenges would be crucial.

75. Landlocked developing countries were disproportionately affected by climate change and its adverse impacts, including land degradation, desertification, deforestation, floods and droughts, owing to their structural vulnerabilities and limited productive capacities. As most landlocked developing countries were largely dependent on a few primary agricultural or mineral commodities, their adaptation and mitigation efforts would require additional support, including through existing financing mechanisms such as the Adaptation Fund, the Global Environmental Facility Trust Fund and the Green Climate Fund.

76. The substantive preparations for the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 would take place during the current session of the General Assembly. Innovative and sustainable solutions would need to be found to accelerate the implementation of both the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda by landlocked developing countries.

77. **Mr. Jaime Calderón** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets were the basis for meeting regional and global challenges and represented a confirmation of the pledge to leave no one behind. However, that outcome would require the mobilization of appropriate financial and non-financial resources. Against that backdrop, the resolutions to be negotiated by the Committee must provide political guidance and address sustainable development from the perspective of the challenges faced by developing countries. The common objective should be to bring added value to the overall implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in order to achieve the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

78. CELAC was concerned that access to concessional finance from international financial institutions was reduced as per capita income increased, resulting in countries not being able to access sufficient affordable financing from other sources to meet their needs. It continued to be committed to promoting criteria that used multidimensional indicators for the accurate measurement of the complex and diverse realities of development in the region, and encouraged shareholders in multilateral development banks and donors to develop graduation policies that were sequenced, phased and gradual.

79. CELAC supported South-South cooperation as a complement to, not a substitute for, North-South and triangular cooperation and recognized that the success of the 2030 Agenda would depend on addressing the rights of youth, women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, refugees and other groups. Similarly, gender equity and equality and the advancement of women were prerequisites for the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights, the eradication of all forms of violence against women, adolescents and girls, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

80. International cooperation must take into account the different development stages, priorities, circumstances and capabilities of developing countries, including the fact that all States had full and permanent sovereignty over all their wealth, natural resources and economic activities. An enabling international environment to support national efforts was the best way to achieve the overarching international goal of poverty eradication in an irreversible way. In that context, CELAC rejected the unilateral application of economic, financial or commercial measures incompatible with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

81. Lastly, in the area of climate change, CELAC recognized the importance of strengthening the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and reaching agreement on a robust outcome for the work programme under the Paris Agreement.

82. **Mr. Vale de Almeida** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that by reaching agreement on the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, the international community had adopted the most ambitious sustainable development agenda ever. That agenda should guide policy and action in countries at all stages of their development and should also steer the Committee in its work.

83. The European Union attached great importance to the Committee living up to its full potential and regretted the fact that discussions on its revitalization had thus far not made more progress. While the steps already taken to improve the Committee's work were welcome, much more needed to be done to improve its efficient functioning. In particular, the European Union would continue to insist on the need to ensure respect for the deadlines set by the Bureau, and for rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Furthermore, the European Union would support measures that allocated more time for discussions on the

preparation and negotiation of resolutions. Where the late submission of a draft resolution did not allow sufficient time for consultations to be held in order to achieve consensus on a meaningful resolution, the draft resolution in question should be referred to the next session.

84. The Sustainable Development Goals were an extraordinary opportunity to prioritize efforts beneficial to the planet and its people. In June 2017, as part of its response to the 2030 Agenda, the European Union had adopted a shared vision for development policy that also took into account the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement: the new European Consensus on Development. At the same time, the European Union was working to ensure that its existing and new policies were in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

85. As climate change was one of the most pressing global challenges, there was a need to reaffirm joint commitments to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and to place an emphasis on protecting the environment from further degradation.

86. To achieve the collective vision of a sustainable future, it should be borne in mind that the rule of law and development were strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The advancement of the rule of law was essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.